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# A Multilateral Approach for Optimizing Africa's Access to Strategic Human Talent

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**Abstract:** *This paper considers Africa's human development capacity through a talent management and development framework. It uses information from the United Nations, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the African Union, and a variety of other sources to illustrate both the talent challenges and opportunities facing African countries, institutions, and organizations. Through a comparison of management models, historiography, content analysis, and case studies, it argues that the five options for talent development (stealing, buying, borrowing, developing, and retaining talent) that have impacted its past and present access to talent can be redirected towards the continent's future advancement.*

**T**his paper considers various options available to help promote Africa's access to strategic human talent. Five options are reviewed: stealing; buying; borrowing; developing; and retaining talent. These options are analyzed from historical and global perspectives to assess their potential use for promoting talent objectives for Africa.

Data from a variety of sources are drawn upon to facilitate analyses of these options. This includes information from the United Nations, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the African Union, and a variety of other sources. Information from these data sources is used to illustrate both the talent challenges and opportunities facing African countries, institutions, and organizations.

The emerging concept of talent management and development provides the theoretical framework for this paper. While this concept embraces a variety of perspectives (culture, gender, enterprise, etc.) only two will be addressed in this paper: humanistic and managerial perspective.

## Methods

Several qualitative methods are drawn upon to gather and analyze data sources described above. These include: comparison of management models, historiography, content analysis, and case studies. The humanistic and managerial perspectives for managing people are used to contrast the differences between human talent, human capital, human resources, and personnel management approaches to attracting, acquiring and developing individuals to work in contemporary organizations. In addition, advantages of the talent management framework for addressing Africa's strategic talent needs are also highlighted.

Information from the three datasets mentioned above is used to analyze the five options for acquiring talent. A historical analysis is drawn upon to examine the stealing of talent from Africa

through both the Transatlantic Slave and the Sub-Saharan Trade. Extrapolation is then used to render an assessment of the continuing impact these historic events are having on Africa's access to talent. Attention is also given to the contemporary extraction of talent from Africa, including the large volume of forced labor still prevalent on much of the continent.

Content analyses were used to analyze the various means through which strategic talent is bought and borrowed from Africa. Development of talent in Africa is analyzed using UN and African Union data to assess talent development efforts on the continent. Finally, case studies are drawn upon to illustrate successful initiatives for acquiring access to and retaining talent in several African countries.

### **A Talent Management Imperative for Africa**

Whether building organizations, communities or nations, having the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time and doing the right things has always been an enduring challenge. A variety of management systems have been developed to address this challenge. Some of the more recent include personnel, human resources, and human capital management systems. Each has helped us better understand this challenge and offers processes and procedures to enhance individuals' performance in organizations.

The advent of personnel management provided managers with procedures and practices for every stage of the employment process. Nonetheless, the focus was on the processes, as opposed to the people organizations seek to employ. The human resources framework attempted to address this omission by making employees equivalent with other resources used to help organizations achieve their objectives. While recognizing employees as organizational assets, they were "no more or less" valuable than other resources consumed for the production of goods and services in this framework. In contrast, the concept of human capital suggests that employees are more than just organizational assets.

Human capital purports that employees are organizations' "greatest assets" because they are not consumed, they grow in value, and therefore, they are "capital assets." While welcomed by some, others vehemently oppose this special classification of employees. This opposition centers around two obstacles: (1) the classification of humans as capital which is owned by organizations, and (2) the lack of appreciation for the contemporary characteristics of human talent and individual agency. As a consequence, it also limits organizations' capacity to address the challenge of attracting and retaining human talent. The talent management model helps remove these obstacles and puts forward a framework that appreciates the (1) liberation of labor from its dependency on organizations, (2) leadership of knowledge workers in the global economy, (3) impact of emerging demography transformations on management and leadership in contemporary organizations, and (4) effect of international competition for strategic talent on achievement of employment objectives. This talent management framework is positioning organizations in all sectors to better develop, attract and retain access to strategic talent. As illustrated below, nowhere is the need for access to strategic talent—and the opportunities to produce it—greater than in Sub-Saharan Africa.

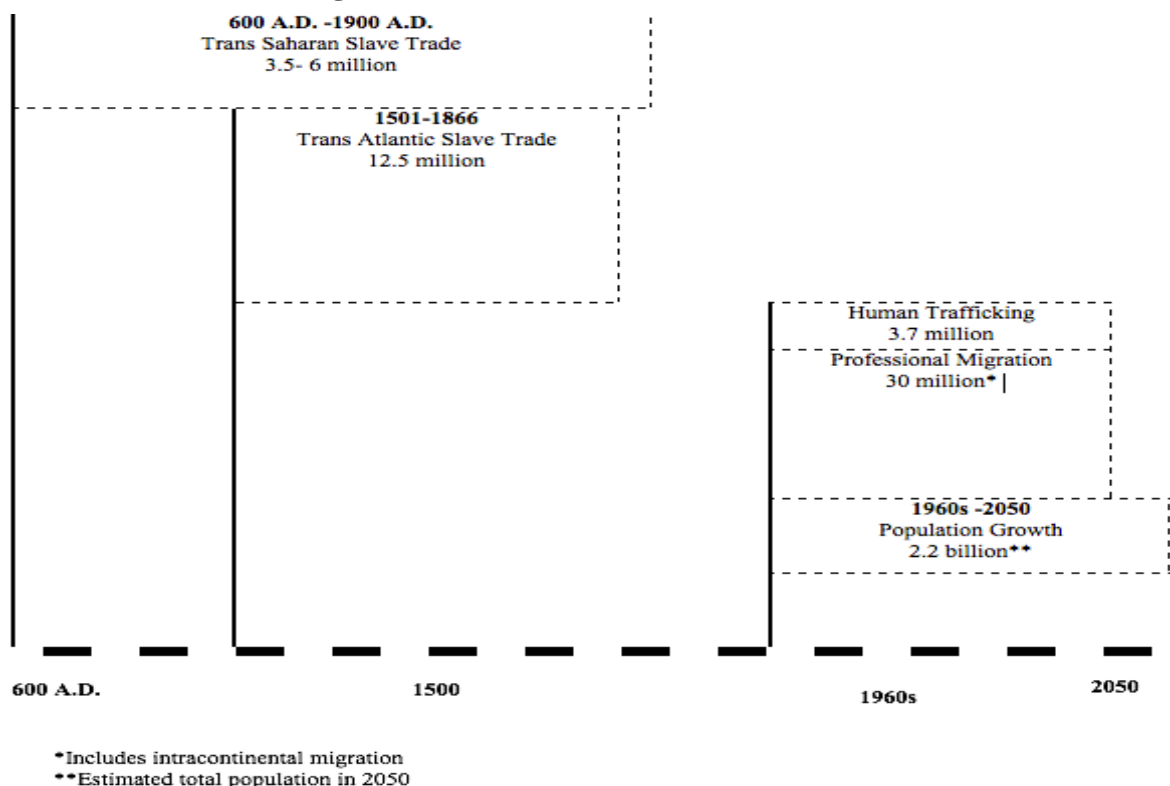
### **Stealing: Counting Africa's Talent Losses, Past and Present**

The impact of the Transatlantic Slave Trade on Africa's development has been widely documented (see **Figure 1**). The array of skilled craftsmen, intellectuals, agriculturalists, religious

and civic leaders, and other talented contributors to African society, taken during this period, represented individuals who would have been instrumental for the sustainability of their communities. The contributions of this stolen talent to other societies (Arabia, Europe, North America, South America, and Asia) was manifested in the rapid development they achieved (Inikori 2002).

The Americas, for example, was developed extensively with the use of slave labor. Author J.E. Inikori (2002) conjectures that the gains from commodities produced by enslaved Africans in the Americas rose from £3.241 million per annum at the beginning of the Transatlantic trade to around £231.046 million annually in the final decades before abolition. Similarly, Arabia achieved significant cultural and economic advancement through the extraction of human talent from Eastern and Northern Africa. Aside from the gains received from gold and silver exported from African mines and hardwoods removed from forests, talent from the Trans-Saharan slave trade was also used to bolster the agricultural, industrial, and commercial sectors throughout the MidEast (Lewis 1995). In Europe, trading companies like the Compagnie Francaise d'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO), Societe Commerciale Ouest Africaine (SCOA), and the United Africa Company (UAC) amassed substantial amounts of capital for their home countries during the colonial period through the exploitation of African labor and the exportation of the wealth of raw materials from the continent (Rodney 1973).

**Figure 1: Africa's Historical Losses and Gains**



### *The Scale of Slave Trades in Africa.*

According to the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, an estimated 12.5 million individuals are reported as having embarked from the coasts of Africa and travelled across the Atlantic Ocean from 1501 to 1866 (Estimates Database 2013; see **Figure 1**). Slave ships leaving from the West Central Africa and St. Helena region accounted for the loss of more than 5.69 million Africans, another nearly 2 million came from ports located at the Bight of Benin, and the Bight of Biafra saw the departure of about 1.5 million people from their shores (Estimates Database 2013). Even these figures, however, fail to account for the possibly millions of other individuals who died of illness or were killed before they were taken onto ships (Davidson 1988). Still other scholars approximate that from 3.5 million to upwards of six million persons were transported across the Saharan Desert to Arabia over a period of nine centuries (Austen 1979; Mauny 1961; Wright 2007; see **Figure 1**). The Transatlantic and Trans-Saharan slave trade had devastating effects on the continent, and its legacy is still manifested in the wide prevalence of human trafficking that plagues Africa today.

### ***Trafficking***

Even though the slave trade has officially ended, Africa's potential talent continues to be diverted towards illicit and destructive enterprises. The prevalence of human trafficking, for instance, accounts for considerable losses of human talent to activities ranging from sexual exploitation and forced labor to child soldiering. While researchers' abilities to document the number of victims trafficked in the region is limited, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2014) reported significant instances of human trafficking, particularly from the West African region. Aside from the Balkans, West African victims were the most likely to be transported across borders in 2014 (UNODC 2014). The International Labour Organization, for example, estimates that approximately 3.7 million Africans were trapped in forced labor, and that they lose as much as \$1.5 billion in lost wages and fraudulent recruitment fees (ILO News 2013) (see **Figure 1**). Sub-Saharan Africa also has the highest known instances of child trafficking in the world (UNODC 2014).

Aside from the abusive, exploitative nature of these systems, such practices continue to deprive African societies of the innovative capacity of some of its best and brightest members. The "kafala" system of employer-sponsored work visas, in particular, have prompted international outcry (Fulford 2014; Helleary 2012; Human Rights Watch 2008; Wood 2011). Prevalent in countries throughout the Gulf States, individuals from Africa and Asia are often defrauded by recruitment agencies who promise them high-paying jobs abroad but, instead, many arrive in countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or Lebanon and are forced to work in low-skilled jobs under slave-like conditions for menial pay—if they receive any pay at all (Pattisson 2015). Several governments in Africa have even gone so far as to place restrictions and bans on their citizens traveling to this region in search of employment opportunities (BBC News 2012; Sisay 2015). Severally, the labor of Africa's citizens engaged in elaborate structures of illegal drug trafficking are believed to generate about \$3.34 billion annually in West Africa alone (UNODC 2014). Little of which is used support sustainable community development activity.

### **Buying: Exodus of Skilled Labor**

While the scope and scale of individuals being lured or forced from their homes by corrupt forms of talent acquisition is indeed alarming, international migration driven by global competition

for talent also contributes to the displacement of talent both regionally and across continental boundaries. Even though the information on the mobility of individuals from African nations is limited, the discouraging trend of talent migration has been noted. A major analysis of this trend was undertaken by Ratha et al. in 2011. As they point out, “. . . about 30 million Africans—about 3 percent of the population—have migrated internationally . . .” (Ratha et al. 2011, 1). They found that in 2000 one out of every eight Africans with a university education live in a country in the OECD.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) database, however, draws on statistics from 2013, to offer a more recent picture of trends in migration patterns across Africa. With regards to the continent's most populous countries—Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Africa, respectively—out-of-Africa migration is particularly prevalent (see **Table 1**). In the case of Nigeria, the 436,000 migrating to the United Kingdom and the United States in 2013, nearly rivals the total for all Nigerians who were reported to have migrated to other countries in Africa (IOM 2013). Comparably, while the database indicates that 62,431 Ethiopians migrating within the continent were destined for Sudan, over 195,000 travelled to the United States and an additional 150,000 relocated to Saudi Arabia (IOM 2013). The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) provides a notable contrast. Slightly less than 81,000 Congolese were recorded as having settled in Belgium—the most frequented destination for the DRC's out-of-Africa migrants (IOM 2013). Conversely, 266,319 citizens of the DRC were found to be living in the Republic of the Congo, 175,738 were in Rwanda, 169,074 were in Uganda, more than 148,000 were in Burundi, and nearly 100,000 had migrated to Tanzania (IOM 2013).

**Table 1: Migration from Africa's Most Populous Countries**

	<b>In-Africa Migration</b>		<b>Out-of-Africa Migration</b>	
	<i>Top Countries</i>	<i>Recipient Migrants</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Migrants</i>
<b><i>Nigeria</i></b>	Chad	114,025	United Kingdom	150,918
	Cameroon	78,292	United States	210,647
<b><i>Ethiopia</i></b>	Sudan	152,094	United States	139,693
	Djibouti	34,697	Israel	87,556
<b><i>Egypt</i></b>	Libya	394,064	Saudi Arabia	1,005,873
	Sudan	12,088	Jordan	851,803
<b><i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i></b>	Rwanda	372,964	Belgium	76,870
	Uganda	85,476	France	61,948
<b><i>South Africa</i></b>	Mozambique	154,579	Australia	132,756
	Namibia	35,238	United Kingdom	225,856

Similar trends emerge along income lines. Out-of-Africa migration is particularly prevalent amongst Africa's more affluent countries. Individuals migrating from the five countries with the lowest GDP per capita—Somalia, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Burundi—were most often located in countries relatively close to their borders (CIA 2015b; IOM 2013; see **Table 2**). However, those leaving the countries with the highest GDPs per capita—Gabon, Botswana, Libya, and South Africa—were often reported as living in France, the United States, Canada, Australia, and China (CIA 2015b; IOM 2013). Absent more longitudinal data, there are some limitations to our ability to make inferences. However, when supplemented with evidence from several scholarly works, possible patterns in the mobility of Africa's talent pool starts to emerge.

**Table 2: Migration from African Countries with Lowest GDP**

	<b>In-Africa Migration</b>			<b>Out-of-Africa Migration</b>	
	<i>Top Countries</i>	<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Migrants</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Migrants</i>
<b>Somalia</b>					
	Ethiopia		161,179	United Kingdom	110,326
	Djibouti		57,246	United States	109,618
<b>Central African Republic</b>					
	Chad		88,978	France	13,945
	Congo-Brazzaville		10,567	Netherlands	970
<b>Democratic Republic of Congo</b>					
	Rwanda		372,964	Belgium	76,870
	Uganda		85,476	France	61,948
<b>Liberia</b>					
	Guinea		189,437	United States	66,652
	Ivory Coast		74,734	Italy	2,439
<b>Burundi</b>					
	Tanzania		151,313	Belgium	4,991
	Uganda		101,826	Netherlands	2,698

More commonly referred to as “brain drain,” professionals who were educated in one country are enticed abroad by the prospect of better salaries and/or more congenial conditions for them to further develop their talent. While it is difficult to calculate the full scale of this phenomenon, researchers approximate that, of the 4% of Sub-Saharan African labor force that is identified as skilled, one in five has left their home countries in search of better opportunities

(Banya and Zajda 2015). Amongst these, over 3.5 million African women migrated internationally in 2000 (Dumont, Martin, and Spielvogel 2007). Where the rates of low-skilled women leaving the continent rose by 33%, collectively, African countries experienced a 113% leap in the number of high-skilled women travelling abroad (Capuano and Marfouk 2013).

Globally, migrants of Sub-Saharan African origins represent about 40% of all migrating skilled laborers; roughly 80,000 managers and 23,000 academic professionals are estimated to have taken positions abroad each year in the period from 1990 to 1995 (Banya and Zajda 2015). Africa's healthcare industry has also sustained heavy losses resulting from international labor force demands. Researchers estimate that about one in every five African physicians and one in ten professional nurses were pursuing a career abroad (Clemens and Pettersson 2008). In the sports world, nearly one in five of the goals in soccer's Premier League were scored by athletes of African origins (Kwenda 2015). As Ratha et al. (2011) have observed,

“high-skilled emigration can also impair development by reducing the supply of critical services; limiting productivity spillovers to both high- and low-skilled workers; reducing the potential for innovative and creative activities that are at the core of long-term growth; and limiting contributions to the health of social, political, and economic institutions. The loss of workers educated at public expense can represent a substantial fiscal drain, and the many university-educated African emigrants who fail to obtain skilled jobs in high-income destination countries represent a lost investment in human capital (a recent study of the U.S. job market finds that immigrants with bachelor's degrees from 7 of 15 African countries surveyed have less than a 40 percent chance of ending up in a skilled job)” (p.7).

In his article entitled “Human Capital Flight: Stratification, Globalization and the Challenges to Tertiary Education in Africa,” B.J. Ndulu (2004) offers an even more telling analysis of the economic costs of talent displacement on the continent. He frames the problem this way:

“...The main cost is the loss of investment in education. The U.N. High Commission for Refugees (2001) estimates that the educational capital embodied in highly skilled graduates who emigrated to the United States in 1990 alone was \$640 million. It concludes that emigration can represent a significant transfer of resources from poor countries to rich. The U.N. Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), for its part, estimated the annual cash value of each African professional migrant, based on 1979 prices, at \$184,000 (Oyowe, 1996). With an estimate of roughly 95,000 African professionals in the United States alone, this suggests that Africa is losing almost US\$17.5 billion annually through brain drain, while receiving technical assistance of only about US\$4 billion from all sources. These estimates do not necessarily represent the opportunity cost of the loss to African countries as it is not certain whether the skilled emigrants would have been gainfully engaged in their own professions at home.” (Ndulu 2004, 66).

If these estimates are accurate, Africa's investments in talent, relative to its returns would imply that the continent continues to be a donor for the development of Western nations.

### ***Visa Selectivity as a Talent Acquisition Mechanism***

Migration trends in general—and out-of-Africa trends specifically—provide a poignant example of the significance of competition for talent in today's globalized world. Moreover, it



demonstrates a critical distinction between the managerial perspectives based on human capital and human resources models and those oriented towards talent management: human agency and volition. Buying talent involves not only explicit offers of employment, but it can also entail attracting talented individuals through non-monetary means, such as influencing their perceptions of their probability of future success. For instance, while the proportion of employee-sponsored visas is relatively small with regards to the most popular countries for out-of-Africa migration, researchers have repeatedly found that the anticipated benefits of relocation constitute a significant determinant as to whether people ultimately stay in their home country or depart (Borozan and Bojanic 2015; Crush and Pendleton 2012; Hatton and Williamson 2002b; Karemera, Oguledo, and Davis 2000).

Despite whatever desire people may have to exit their home country or the continent entirely, the permeability of international borders is mediated by national immigration policies even in this era of “worldwide interconnectedness” (Held et al. 1999, 2; Neumayer 2006). Of the many national interests served by immigration policy, they occupy a critical role in supporting countries’ talent acquisition strategies because they enable nations to exercise a degree of selectivity in which migrants are permitted to enter their borders.

Within OECD countries where an aging workforce has created additional incentives to attract talent from elsewhere, visa policies are frequently fashioned in a way that gives preference to migrants who have financial resources at their disposal and/or the potential to mitigate domestic skill gaps (Shachar 2006). Visa applicants in Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand are evaluated according to a point-based schema where prospective migrants are given priority according to talent-related indicators, such as their level of education, occupational experience, and alignment of their skill sets with current labor market demands (Boubtane, Dumont, and Rault 2014; Grangier, Hodgson, and Mcleod 2012). Aside from creating a distinct review process for the “Skills and Talent” visa, France—a leading recipient country for African migrants—issued nearly one-third of all visas to students between 1994 and 2008 (Boubtane, Coulibaly, D’Albis, and Policy 2015). The visa system in the United States is also used to attract highly-skilled talent from Africa.

### ***The United States as a Recipient of Africa’s Knowledge Class: A Case Study in “Diversity”***

The “Diversity” Visa Lottery has been an important catalyst to America’s ability to attract and maintain high-skilled talent. The Diversity Visa Lottery was created in 1990 in response to criticisms that immigration policies that have traditionally shown partiality towards applicants with existing family relationships in the United States constituted a self-perpetuating disadvantage for applicants from sending countries whose citizens were underrepresented in American society (Law 2002; Wasem 2011). Each year, the United States’ Department of State (DOS) issues 50,000 permanent residence visas by randomly selecting names from a pool of eligible applicants in ‘non-traditional’ source countries. In the 2015 selection cycle, the DOS processed 9,388,986 qualified entries; 46% of selected applicants were from African source countries (DOS 2015).

Although still a relatively small proportion of the total immigrant population, African migrants are increasingly being recruited—both directly and indirectly—to bolster the American labor force. According to a policy brief produced on behalf of the American Immigration Law Foundation, African migration to the United States rose by 170% between 1990 and 2000 (Eissa 2005). Similarly, Kristen McCabe (2011) of the Migration Policy Institute notes that nearly half

of African-born migrants living in the United States arrived after 2000. These migrants tend to be among the best-educated members of American society.

Up to 59% of Nigerian immigrants to the United States and 47% of Ghanaians are high-skilled, and nearly one-third of Kenyan immigrants are in the skilled class (Capps, McCabe, and Fix 2012). As opposed to being designed to temporarily accommodate professionals while they develop their talents, skill-based immigration policy—both in the United States and elsewhere in the OECD—is oriented towards attracting ‘permanent residents’ (Dumont and Lamaitre 2005). For instance, those who gain entry through the “diversity” visa process are awarded legal permanent resident status that makes them eligible to make a petition to become full citizens in the future (Wasem 2011). As B. Ikubolajeh Logan and Kevin J. A. Thomas (2012) argue that, while the Diversity Lottery is ostensibly meant to reinforce America’s image as a ‘nation of immigrants,’ the process is implicitly structured to reap the dividends of talent investments made in applicants’ countries of origin. Firstly, it requires that all prospective applicants possess either a high school diploma (school-leaving certificate) or a total of four years of vocational training and work experience (Wasem 2011). A high school diploma is an essential prerequisite to matriculation into higher education, while vocational training is one of the few alternatives to accessing the skilled job market. This would imply that “diversity” visa recipients must, at a minimum, already have a trade or be prepared to pursue further education.

These requirements carry even greater significance when one considers that the costs of the United States’ public primary, middle school, and secondary schools are principally subsidized by tax revenues while federal funding to universities has progressively declined in recent decades (Rich 2006). As such, requiring that individuals possess a diploma or vocational training when they arrive avoids some of the overhead costs associated with domestic talent development and substantially reduces the amount of time before society is able to reap the benefits of “diversity” visa-holders’ efforts. This is particularly true of recent talent attracted from Africa.

Although there is a high degree of variation across countries, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) reported that, between 2010 and 2013, the aggregate rate of secondary school enrollment on the continent was 53.6%, meaning that only about half of secondary school-aged youth have the opportunity to attend high school at all—let alone receive a diploma (ADBG, AU Commission, and UNECA, 2014). Those who do possess the necessary qualifications, Logan and Thomas (2012) explain, incur substantial expenses and fees, which is often beyond the financial capacity of individuals who live at the subsistence level. Aside from the costs of purchasing an airline ticket if their application is successful, applicants are required to spend an additional \$1,000 per person on visa-related fees before they and their families are granted security clearance to travel (Logan and Thomas 2012). Moreover, individuals who do not live near a U.S. embassy must also be able to afford the expense of transportation, food, and lodging so that they are able to participate in the required in-person interview (Logan and Thomas 2012). As Emmanuel Ngwainmbi (2015) points out, even being able to access the application, which is available online, may constitute a considerable barrier for prospective migrants who live in areas where electricity and internet access is limited.

Capps et al.’s (2012) analysis of demographic trends amongst Sub-Saharan African migrants provides a compelling illustration of the effects of “diversity” visa selectivity as a talent acquisition mechanism. Although “diversity” visa applicants must have either a high school diploma or vocational training and experience at a minimum; rates of educational attainment

amongst migrants from the Sub Saharan region exceed those of native-born Americans in the aggregate. For example, in 2007, 38% of individuals aged 25 or older who migrated from Sub-Saharan Africa possessed at least a four-year degree, compared with 27% of the United States' domestic population (Capps et al. 2012).

The 24% of Africans who established a domicile in the United States in 2010 as “diversity” visa holders was almost double the proportion granted admission under the status of immediate relatives of legal immigrants (Capps et al. 2012). Nevertheless, this is also beginning to be a mechanism for attracting African talent from the continent. Timothy Hatton and Jeffery Williamson's (2002a) predictive analysis of African migration patterns in the twenty-first century cautioned that such patterns may point to what they term as a “friends and relatives effect.” The “friends and relatives effect” hypothesizes that, with increased success in the global labor market and the expansion of social networks within the host country, there is an increased likelihood that displaced knowledge workers will not only stay permanently, but also encourage their friends and relatives to join them abroad (Logan 2009). Dorrit Posel's (2001) study of remittance behavior in a sample of rural South African households expands the discussion of the “friends and family effect” by offering insights into the implications for those left behind.

As opposed to undertaking an analysis that focused exclusively on the financial capacity of the individual sending remittances, Posel (2001) examined household predictors of the frequency and amount of financial support migrants provide. She found that remittances did not flow in steady or consistent streams but rather are associated with factors such as the perceived immediacy of certain family members' needs, the “degree of biological relatedness” of those in the household, and whether or not their spouse is living in the household. She further concludes that, rather than a simple function of altruism, remittances, to some degree, represent an interdependent relationship between migrants who have left home and their familial relations who have stayed (Posel 2001). In spite of their legal status or physical location, however, there are abundant examples of Africans in the diaspora committed to advancing the wellbeing of those still on the continent.

### **Borrowing Talent: Knowledge Transfer across Borders**

The ability of countries outside of the continent to attract African talent belies the enduring connections that numerous African-born knowledge workers maintain with their countries of origin regardless of where they reside. Research suggests that the scope and scale of talent displacement in Africa may be more related to perceived necessity than a genuine desire to leave home definitively. Borazon and Bojanic (2015) conducted an empirical study to analyze variance between factors that encourage university students to remain in their countries of origin and those that push them to relocate. Students were administered a questionnaire aimed at understanding their level of satisfaction with a multiplicity of factors (economic conditions, social networks, access to public goods and services, and the availability of opportunities) in their host country versus those in their country of origin. Although these scholars determined that motives for migration are complex, they noted that the most significant factor influencing students' decisions to migrate was the prospect of finding a job (Borazon and Bojanic 2015). Johnathan Crush and Wade Pendleton (2012) arrived at a similar conclusion in their examination of emigration attitudes among health sector and non-health sector students residing in SADC (Southern African Development Community) countries. Both of these studies contribute to placing Africa's access

to strategic talent in context.

While the increase in out-of-Africa migration has altered the dynamics of access to indigenous talent, it does not inevitably signify that members of the diaspora are completely inaccessible to their home countries. There is a strong body of evidence suggesting that “buying” talent may grant receiving countries cheaper, more ready access to African talent, but it neither implies exclusive nor permanent privileges.

This is especially relevant with regards to “borrowed” talent, such as students concluding their studies abroad. Borazon and Bojanic (2015) articulate this best when they make the observation that, “University students are more mobile, single, less burdened by families and their own property. However, taking into account average grades implying that these are important decisionmaking [sic] motives...respondents feel that social networks are important factors that have a slightly higher ‘pull’ power towards staying” (2015, 78). Put another way, developing strategies to leverage students’ emotional connections with their contacts back home when they are making critical decisions about where to begin their careers could prove fruitful for their sending countries. One palpable example of this practice is the Nigerian Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program. Developed in 1973 to promote national unity, civic responsibility and patriotism, the NYSC program is a one-year service assignment where recent graduates—aged 30 or younger—work on development projects in a region outside of their home state (Eberly 1992; Obiniyi, Anujeonye, and Adewale 2013; Ogundele, Sofoluwe, and Kayode 2012). Service in the NYSC is a requisite for anyone who desires to enter Nigeria’s formal labor market or work within the government (Onyishi and Ezeibe 2014). As result, the program attracts applications, not only from domestic students, but also foreign-trained students who want to ensure that the option to participate in the domestic labor market remains open to them.

Even in the case of knowledge workers who have permanently relocated, the money that lures knowledge workers away from home often returns in the form of remittance payments to family members who still live there. Gumisai Mutume (2005) attempts to give some sense of the proportion of remittance contributions by citing a World Bank study, which attributes as much as 60% of Mali’s infrastructure construction to funding from Malians in France. In 2013 Ugandan remittances were estimated to have generated about twice the revenue of coffee—the country’s main export, and in Liberia and Lesotho, remittances constitute around 20% of the GDP (“Remittances to developing countries,” 2014). Families in Nigeria are reported to have received \$21 billion in a single year. These contributions from the diaspora make Sub Saharan Africa the only region in the world to receive more money from remittances than official development assistance (ODA) (Youth 2014). These numbers are even more astounding when one considers the preponderance of evidence that untold amounts of remittances pass through informal channels that are not reflected in official approximations (Black and King 2004; Pieke, Van Hear, and Lindley 2007; Sander 2003).

Beyond their individual efforts, migrants abroad have also fostered the formation of distinct communities that serve to facilitate intellectual exchange and talent development in both their countries of origin and their adopted homelands. Voluntary community (ethnic, national, regional, or Pan-African) associations occupy multifaceted roles abroad. Instruments of social and cultural heritage preservation, credit unions, political advocacy groups, community groups, professional associations, trade guilds and/or information repositories, such community-based arrangements also exemplify the interdependent nature of the relationship between talented Africans abroad and

their countries of origin.

One commercial neighborhood in Guangzhou, China, for example, has been dubbed the “Chocolate City” by some as a reference to the estimated 15,000 to 20,000 East and West African entrepreneurs who live and work there (Bodomo 2010; Tu Huynh 2015). As the numbers of men and women travelling between countries in Africa and Guangzhou have risen, overall trade with China has also gained momentum. Whereas researchers project that Guangzhou’s total trade with the continent amounted to around \$500 million in 1996, they placed it at an excess of \$3 billion in 2008 (Li, Laurence, and Xue 2009).

Senegalese Mourides have experienced similar—if not greater—success, most notably in New York City, but also in key cities in Europe and Asia as well. A report for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) noted that the Senegalese migrants community in Buenos Aires has earned the name of “Little Dakar” (Pizarro and Reboiras Finardi 2011).<sup>1</sup> Led by Cheikh Amadou Bamba, Mourides organized dahiras, or religious associations, that were designed to maintain community cohesion (Babou 2002). This initiative emanates from the colonial era, where members of the dahiras who participated in religious training also engaged in micro-lending while working as laborers harvesting Senegal’s staple crop and peanuts (Ebin, 1995). As their efforts to proselytize increased, they began to expand their trade networks internationally and to promote the cause of development at home. Aside from providing vital services, such as banking, money transfers, credit lines, legal defense, and even financial assistance for funeral services for Senegalese migrants who die abroad; Mourides place heavy emphasis on charitable contributions (Babou 2002; Buggenhagen 2012; Ebin 1995). According to Cheikh Anta Babou (2002), one dahira in New York collected \$8 million towards the construction of a new hospital in Touba, the seat of the Mouride caliphate. Mourides have used their influence to both directly assist numerous Senegalese citizens and members of the diaspora to gain access to education and indirectly to welcome bought and borrowed talent to their community at home and abroad. While the loss of talent in Africa has been significant, the development of talent on the continent, in several regards, equals or exceeds efforts in other regions of the world. While the loss of talent in Africa has been significant, the development of talent on the continent, in several regards, equals or exceeds efforts in other regions of the world.

### **Africa’s Development of Talent**

Considering GDP expenditures on education and other investments in talent development, several African countries rank in the top percentile. For example, according to the CIA World Factbook (2015c), Lesotho has the largest per capita GDP expenditure on education. Other African countries are highly ranked in this category as well. Out of the 173 countries reviewed, Botswana, Sao Tome and Principe, Namibia, Djibouti, Swaziland, Ghana, and Comoros also ranked among the top 20 internationally (CIA, 2015c).

As illustrated above, Africans who leave their home countries are some of the most highly educated immigrants in the world. The high level of terminal degrees achieved by Africans abroad is also evidence of Africa’s investment in talent development. The phenomenal number of scientists, academicians, and other professional achievers who have achieved prominence is

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<sup>1</sup> Dakar is the administrative and financial capital of Senegal.

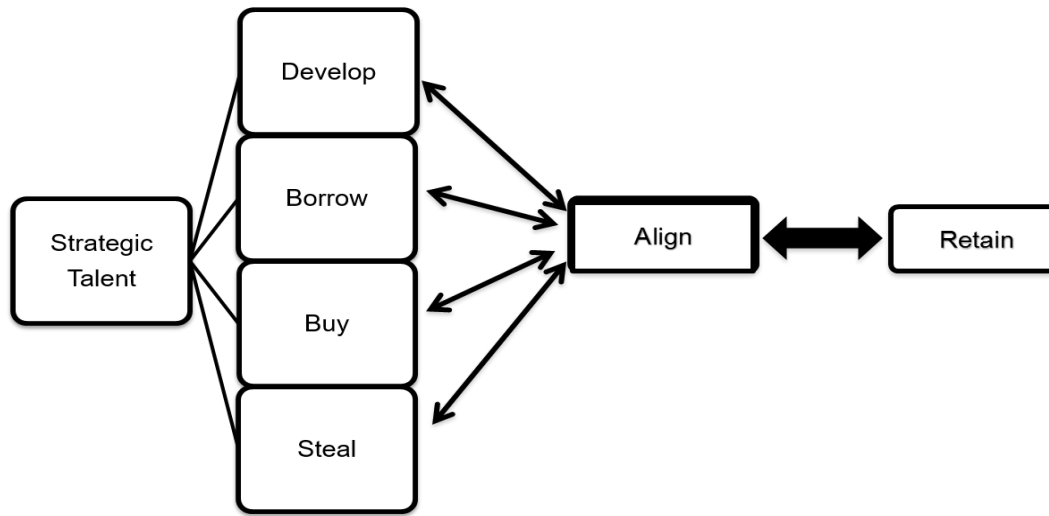
unsurpassed.

### ***Notable Examples of Pan-African Talent Contributions***

Whether temporary or permanent, African migrants working in academia, research, politics, economics, entertainment, sports, etc. exemplify Africa's historical success in producing viable talent for the whole of the international community. For example, Zeresenay (Zeray) Alemseged, Ethiopian paleoanthropologist and Chair of the Anthropology Department at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, California, USA, highlighted the role of the continent in human history when he uncovered the "world's oldest child," the most complete human skeleton found to date (Pogue 2012). Dambisa Moyo, a Zambian-born international economist and author of *Dead Aid*, has helped bring a new perspective to the economic relationships between African countries and the West. While an acclaimed Dean of Engineering in the United States, Babatunde Ogunnaike also teaches graduate courses at the African University of Science of Technology (AUST) in Lagos (Roberts 2013). Additionally, Gambia-born Fatou Bensouda, Sudan-born entrepreneur and philanthropist Mo Ibrahim, and DRC-born Cecile Kyenge—Italy's first MP of African descent—have done much to raise the profile of African voices and participation in international political processes. Among their endeavors, these and many other individuals bring focus to Africa in their official capacity, engage in philanthropy, advocate for collaborations and networking opportunities between intra- and extra-continental professionals, and bolster efforts of other entities present in Africa.

### ***Emphasizing Intracontinental Youth Contributions***

In addition to the large number of professionals abroad who have received their foundational training in Africa, the continent also has an abundance of youth talent with the potential for contributing to the sustainable development. The African Union Youth Division (AU-YD) (2015) refers to Africa as the "Youthful Continent." As they point out, 65% of the continent's population is under 35 years of age, with approximately 10 million youth arriving on the labor market annually (African Union 2006). With improvements of child mortality rates and longer life expectancies, UNICEF demographers predict that, in less than 35 years, one in every four people on Earth will be Africa-born (UNICEF 2014, see **Figure 1**). Despite the debates concerning overpopulation, this implies a high probability of Africa having fresh young minds available for development now and into the foreseeable future. For this potential to be realized, this talent must be 1) identified, 2) developed, 3) aligned, and 4) retained (see **Figure 2**).

**Figure 2: Strategic Talent Management**

While this article calls for an acceleration of such talent development strategies, innovative achievements of African youth are not unprecedented. In Ghana, entrepreneurs like Bernice Dapaah, executive director of Ghana Bamboo Bikes, demonstrate how an effective talent management strategy can have an exponential effect. Combining environmental stewardship and job creation efforts, Dapaah has worked to network with farmers, small traders, and overseen the development of bike-building courses towards the goal of providing jobs and trades for both skilled and unskilled women and youth—all before finishing her tertiary degree (Ghana Bikes 2016; Policy Innovations 2013). Although her company is young, she has been recognized as one of 214 “Young Global Leaders” under age 40 by the World Economic Forum (Olivier 2014). In Cape Town, South Africa, after surviving a serious car crash and nearly imprisoned for murder as a teen, Bheki Kunene of founded Mind Trix Media, a website-building enterprise, in his bedroom with an initial investment of about 600 rand (\$60 USD) (Bheki Kunene 2015; Kgosiemang 2015). His subsequent success enabled him to earn the distinction of being one of Forbes Magazine’s “30 under 30” most promising African entrepreneurs (Bheki Kunene 2015).

Kunene is featured along with Best Aiyorworth, a 23-year-old native of Uganda, who had to leave school at age 13, but at 23, spearheads a micro-lending business that provides loans to female small business owners, on the condition that their daughters remain in school (Tshabalala, 2015). Like Ms. Aiyorworth, many of Africa’s entrepreneurs have managed to excel despite their limited resources. Malawian teen, William Kamkwamba, educated himself at the public library after his parents could no longer afford school fees; he is now renowned for his achievements building electricity-generating windmills from discarded bikes and debris (Sheerin 2009). Similarly, Zimbabwean Munyaradzi Gwatidzo taught himself how to repair phones to provide for himself and his siblings following his parents’ death and has now developed his ICT firm, Astromobile, into an enterprise that employs 2,000 workers (Anyangwe 2015).

## Retention and Alignment

Above are examples of how talent has been stolen, bought, and borrowed throughout much of African history. While this has had considerable negative effects on the development of the continent, several countries have begun to experience significant growth and expectations for improved standards of living. If Africa is to continue to move forward, it must maintain—and accelerate—its efforts to retain and align the talent it produces. In response to outmigration trends, it is estimated that, collectively, African countries employ more than 250,000 expatriates at a cost of approximately \$20 billion per year (Banya and Zajda 2015). At the same time, many well-trained Africans at home and abroad cannot find meaningful jobs. Clearly, spending a progressively greater proportion of these resources on investment in indigenous talent and/or more strategic investment in expatriate talent would be beneficial for the continent. Moreover, governments should foster a climate that values domestic talent and a broader political and socioeconomic environment that is not restrictive or unduly stifling to the ingenuity of knowledge workers and other strategic talent. This may require reforms relative to governance, property rights, gender equity, youth empowerment, as well as promoting public spaces for dialogue and exchange (Stivers 2008). With regards to Africa's diverse diasporas, Boroza and Bojanic (2015) remind us that many of the same variables that “push” talented individuals to leave home are also implicated in retention, i.e. job options, family connections, and access to public amenities.

## The Return of Borrowed Talent

Return of borrowed talent is a viable option for addressing talent development needs. Africa's talent network extends far beyond those who were born on the continent. Efforts to attract worthwhile talent should also be inclusive of other key groups of individuals with whom Africa's advancement may resonate. With access to more domestic and diaspora talent, African societies would be better able to create their own narratives and define their own needs in consultation of experts who understand—and presumably share—their values and goals (Zoogah and Nkomo 2013). Put another way, these individuals have a personal stake in moving the continent forward.

This process has already begun to some extent. The ATLAS (African Training for Leadership and Advanced Skills Project) program, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), constitutes an example of how institutional efforts can facilitate the return of borrowed talent. Of the 450 African students who were able to study in the United States on the ATLAS award program, 123 were able to return to their home countries (The African-American Institute 1995).<sup>2</sup> Amongst the prominent scholars who have returned home, Kakenya Ntaiya of Kenya agreed to undergo the traditional circumcision ceremony in exchange for a promise from her father that she would be able to remain in school. She later convinced the village elders to support her plans to travel abroad to complete a degree program in the United States by promising them that she would return and contribute to uplifting her village. She is now the founder and president of Kakenya Center for Excellence, the first and only school for Masai girls in her home community (Ntaiya 2013). Berhanu Mengistu, who was born in Ethiopia, has worked extensively in his home country as well as across the continent. Following Apartheid, he produced a guidebook for medium-term budgetary planning in collaboration with the provincial

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<sup>2</sup> An additional 311 were still in the process of completing their degrees.



budget director for the Republic of South Africa while also teaching at the University of Western Cape (Mullen, n.d.). Marietou Makalou of Mali conducted her data-collection in her home country as a component of her degree program at the University of Pittsburgh, USA and was ultimately drafted to serve as technical advisor to the President of the Republic of Mali. Finally, South Africans Sibusiso Vil-Nkomo and Renosi Mokate returned home after nearly 15 years abroad to create the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), a research institute that facilitates efforts to bolster the development of South Africa's public service (Casini 2014).

Africa is also demonstrating an ability to attract the children of individuals who have gone abroad. For example, executive producers, Nicole Amarteifio and Millie Monyo, have not only returned to Ghana after working abroad but have also developed a fictional web series that seeks to capture the multifaceted experiences of other women in the diaspora who return to their home country (*An African City: Home* 2014).

Early in history, African descendants showed their willingness to support development in Africa. Nestled amongst the streets and avenues bearing the names of Africa's freedom fighters like Haile Selassie, Tom Mboya, Patrice Lumumba, and Kwame Nkrumah are memorials honoring the contributions of the diaspora, like Aimé Césaire, W.E.B. DuBois, Malcolm X, and Ralph Bunche. Aimé Césaire, Martinique-born poet and politician, was a key figure in the Negritude movement that used literature to promote pride amongst Africans and people of African descent (Proteau 2001). W.E.B. DuBois, American-born scholar and activist, was invited to Ghana by his close friend Kwame Nkrumah to help compile an *Encyclopedia Africana*, which recognized the accomplishments of Africans worldwide (Afari-Gyan 1991). Malcolm X, American-born advocate of Pan-African empowerment, was renamed Omowale (meaning "the son who has come home") by Nigerian students after one of his talks in Lagos, Nigeria (Curtis 2002). Ralph Bunche, American-born diplomat, travelled extensively in Africa in the course of his work as the first U.S. Department of State official of African descent (Urquhart 1998).

## **Conclusion**

International competition for talent has reshaped Africa's talent management landscape, often with devastating consequences. Whether by force or by choice, Africa's wealth of talent and natural resources have buttressed economies globally. This article considers this history and present conditions and offers suggestions as to how it can be transformed to facilitate Africa's access to strategic talent. Oliver Bakewell (2008) cautions in his critical analysis of the relationship between migration and developmental theory, to paint exit from the continent as simply the "symptom" of an 'African problem' would overlook the central role that global exchanges play in the larger amalgamation of transnational relations. In this respect, Africa's talent network extends far beyond those who were born on the continent. Efforts to attract worthwhile talent should also be inclusive of other key groups of individuals with whom Africa's advancement may resonate. Amongst these groups, African diaspora—ranging from the children of recent African migrants to the posterity of Africans who were involuntarily taken centuries ago; the descendants of other ethnic populations who have made Africa their home, e.g. individuals of South and East Asian descent whose ancestors may have once lived and worked in Africa, and even socially-conscious millennials who may be seeking an intellectual challenge early in their careers.

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